A Balloon

BackButton
(orphan_account)

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Summary:

Eleven never had friends before she thought she could. And then It was real. [Orphaned so that I can work on a better, more in-depth version]

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Author's Note:

> You tell me what this is, because I honestly have no idea.

Papa kept many secrets, that was something Eleven had grown to understand on her own. It was implicit – his movements and his explanations hanging in the air after every single one was supposed to stop.

One would think he, a professional, would have practiced how to deceive more often.

He was his own hubris. Eleven had grown to understand that on her own, as well.

She wasn't naturally self-moderating. She quailed at the thought that she would get bigger and better and be just like Papa. So, Eleven practiced how to deceive more often, and never gave herself that much credit when she tricked Papa and the Others into believing she knew little or nothing at all. Eleven kept her 'cards to close to her side' as she discerned from a conversation between two workers, two Others.

She could get them all, one day. She could, and would, even if the thought broke her heart a little bit when she saw her Papa destroyed just like everything else.

Time, as elusive as it was, was easy to keep track of from when she'd been had one Big Day to the next Big Day. There were new things in her cubic room to help remind her as well, a little plant that flopped

about lazily with its leaves when she touched them, and a curly-furred teddy that she had no idea of knowing if such things existed looking like it did, and a small, silver ring on her finger that she took off more than she put on. The frustration from Papa, at her fears and her lack of quick progress, were worse than the feeling you acquired when you began suffocating.

Eleven had nearly drowned behind cracked and shattered glass many times, with nothing to show for it.

Another Big Day.

But this one was not like any other. Eleven got farther into the dark, and was near blinded by grays, whites, and reds.

There was another creature in the darkness that looked human, but Eleven could smell that it wasn't. Humans didn't smell like copper on the outside – they were all filled with blood, but it wasn't reeking from every pore like it was from the ethereal and gangly person waving at her.

She froze in an instant, not wanting to go near the painted, smiling person with its glowing eyes. But she couldn't fold now, Eleven had to be good even when it scared her.

The thought of being scared made her shudder, and it made the clown's smile split wider in anticipation and disbelief in the luck of

finding a child There.

She walked across an infinite stretch of dark, dripping ground daintily, until she was facing up to the colorful form full of light and more bright color than Eleven had ever seen.

It offered Eleven a bright and shiny and bobbing red, red, *red* balloon from out of nowhere, and a smile.

“Here.” It said. “Take it.”

She took it and smiled back, feeling the emptiness fill with energy that made the smile on the clown’s face slip away. It’s eyes sharpened, and it looked at Eleven with more intelligence than a bloodthirsty predator like before.

It had not expected for the balloon to remain material, physical, *real* and still red, red, *red*. It had not expected Eleven, at all.

She brought the colorful bit of red and white with her, and when she didn’t know if she could do it or not. Yet that was not the only thing that earned her surprise.

It ate, and ate.

Ate Others. Ate everyone until they were gone.

Eleven stood above them, in front of the saltwater tank, barely a line etched in her drenched forehead. She didn't turn away as the morbid curiosity in seeing what It could do kept her mind and her gaze glued to the End in front of her.

She'd been calm when she'd only just heard of the disappearing Others: maintenance workers, field hands, assistants, electricians, scientists… it didn't bother her as much, aside from when her imagination ran wild. She'd let loose a beast in human skin, purely through willpower and that other special thing inside her that had no name. So maybe, her imagination was just running wild all the time, and she could make the beast do what it was doing. *She could.*

Eleven didn't know what to believe when the lines blurred. She did small things when she could, that she knew on some level was of her own volition. It hissed of hunger and Eleven broke the ankle of a woman in a lab coat, and heard the click of her heals as she ran down one of the antiseptic hallways until she was silenced with a *crunch*.

She made ladders shake underfoot of Others, played with the ugly, artificial lights until It produced living shadows on every wall. Others rose and fell and rose like dollies being tossed in the air, and Eleven heard them scream without a word. It never phased her then, because these Others weren't like the test subjects that she'd been put up against. It agreed – the Others deserved it.

"No one to play with." Eleven confided, having heard of playtimes once when an Other talked about his son at home. Children had

friends, with whom they made play dates.

Those who monitored her room with cameras and microphones and night vision were dwindling, and would they say anything of her It if they saw it in the first place? Not now.

"Neither have I." It said, knowing exactly what she'd tried to get across when she has so few words besides 'yes' and 'no' and 'Papa'. Of course, Eleven could say other things after a time, like 'friend', 'play' and 'it' and 'balloon'. All she'd have to say is that simple word and it would appear out of thin air, like a magic trick.

It then chortled and to Eleven, it was almost nice how she could be talking to another friendly child. If It came anywhere close to civil, it was only with her. The Others are adults and only human adults at that – It takes on their fears then pouts to Eleven about it later, about how grown-ups were no fun when all they could only fear were those things they understood. Fear wasn't a treat if they weren't afraid, It explained; meat wasn't sweet.

Eleven tried an Other once, when offered. It was polite to do so, at least Papa had taught her that. She'd gathered that It hadn't ever offered to share its food with anyone or anything, and that that must've been awful lonely, but as much as she'd been grateful to be the very first – Eleven wasn't cut out for eating like It was.

More for It, then.

But now… oh now…

Her Papa hadn't ever been kind to her without a price, a give and a take where it was Eleven giving and having everything else, including the negative and the impossible, taken away. No more of that now, not for Eleven.

She wasn't going to give, but she would take it all. It would take him all.

The sounds were always the worst – Papa's screams were high and he sounded unrecognizable. And then he was gurgling and his lips came loose as It plunged into his neck with hundreds of sharp, shiny and red-coated teeth. It basked in the blood flow and tore away, sinking back in when Eleven caught sight of bone, muscle and vein lolling out of the cavity like a dangle of wires.

She watched It consume Papa whole, not wasting a moment in ripping his limbs apart or eviscerating him from head to toe, but swallowing him up and spitting nothing out. The sight did nothing for her, nor did the blood, but that Eleven could feel his life drain away and see it spiral from out of eyes that dimmed visibly made her tremble.

The power was in her hands still, although It was the perceptible force that feasted on their lives and their emotions. She felt the energy from them when they begged and broke like fragile bird wings.

Once It had tried to get to her. Maybe she was boring It – the thought had worried Eleven at first, before the explanation hit her like a lightning bolt. They could get out and play, now.

Eleven wasn't worried about being eaten by her friend, her It, because the moment It decided to go after her, she made the air crackle and its fingers burn on sparks made from air – like an axe grinding on a spinning wheel. It couldn't touch her, but gave her a Look as best it could with its unfocused eyes, earning her forgiveness – like a big dog from one of her picture books, a gift from a Big Day gone past. It wasn't pretty after the ringing little bells on its ruffles and the impenetrable makeup settled in her mind as familiar, but Eleven didn't mind.

"Outside." She pointed to It then herself, and felt a thrill of excitement and a toil of sickness in her belly at how It smiled and nodded hurriedly.

Eleven didn't know what was Outside, but she walked with her hand firmly clasped with It's and made up her mind to not believe herself in complete control. She would not let It eat the whole Outside and the Others there before she saw them first, before she found something worthwhile.